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LOCAL

EPA returns to clean up Bossert

Feds: Waste site qualifies for Superfund money

By R. PATRICK CORBETT
Observer-Dispatch

UTICA — A dozen years after the federal Environmental Protection Agency's first cleanup effort at the contaminated Bossert Manufacturing site, the agency is back to finish the job.

The old plant perches ominously beside the North-South Arterial in West Utica, its grimy walls and weed-choked asphalt concealing deposits of PCBs, a suspected carcino-

gen, and acids found in waste oil.

Mayor Edward A. Hanna said Tuesday the city spent nearly \$4 million on environmental and legal actions after it seized the Bossert property for back taxes in the mid-1980s.

He recently negotiated a deal for the state to pay for the cleanup because of the city's financial problems, but the state Department of Environmental Conservation subsequently passed the problem along to the

EPA.

Joseph Rotola, chief of the EPA's removal-action section, said the federal agency accepted the referral because "it did qualify for Superfund money." The federal Superfund was established to pay for cleaning up the worst waste sites in the nation.

Rotola said crews soon will start removing PCB-contaminated debris, asbestos, drums of mercury wastes and the lubrication-system piping and will

decontaminate and salvage metal stamping machines.

"We will only demolish structures if needed to make areas safe for the cleanup," he said.

He said the work will take six to eight months and has been budgeted at \$3.9 million.

Hanna said after the EPA moves on, the DEC will do more investigation to determine long-range remediation needs. He said depending on the level of contamination found one or two more phases will be required at a cost that could

go as high as \$18 million.

Betty Frank of South Utica said she worked at Bossert for 37 years.

"I feel bad when I go by and see what happened," she said. "I feel bad for the people who have to live around that dilapidated mess. It will be a delight to have that come down."

But she prefers to remember Bossert as a good place to work. "It was a family-oriented place," she said. "I continue to keep a small group in touch for an annual get-together."

The state spent \$19,396

last winter to put 1,400 feet of 8-foot-high fence along Oswego Street, Noyes Street and Lenox Avenue.

Rotola said it will be the EPA's second trip to the Bossert site.

"Ten years ago we removed waste oils, transformers, liquids in drums, and we high-pressure washed the floors," he said. "Most of it was PCB-contaminated."

That visit cost \$1.9 million, he said.

He said the work planned this time should eliminate health threats from the site.



Top Republicans on county payroll come under scrutiny

Critics: Cost-cutting moves hindered

By JOHN KOHLSTRAND
Observer-Dispatch

UTICA — Just days before the 1998 county budget's release, the number of well-connected Republicans who hold key posts in county government is

► GOP OFFICIALS

Here are members of the Oneida County Republican Committee who are on the county payroll (pay in parentheses). The GOP committee has dozens of members.